THE APOLOGETIC METHODS OF
ISMA'IL R. AL-FARUQI AND CORNELIUS VAN TIL

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I undertake that all material presented for examination is my own work and has not been written for me, in whole or in part, by any other person(s). I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has been duly acknowledged in the work which I present for examination.

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Abstract

International politics and an increase in Muslim residents have raised interest in Muslim-Christian relations in Western nations, including America. Conflict has plagued the history of contact between these two religions. The apologetic approaches of Isma'il Al-Faruqi, a Muslim scholar and apologist, and Cornelius Van Til, a Christian scholar and apologist, demonstrate the root and fruit of the conflict. Both served in the American academic community as professors of religious studies. Both were twentieth century immigrants to America. Both had earned post-graduate degrees in Western philosophy from American universities. Both were devoted believers attempting to persuade modern people to embrace and follow their respective faiths. Each inspired continuing religious movements among their former students. They even lived and worked in the city of Philadelphia at the same time for over a decade. Yet the two never met and never had cause to cross swords of thought.

Van Til saw Christian theism as the only sufficient system for human rational thought about anything, not just religion. Al-Faruqi claimed a purely rational and critical approach led one to either Islam or skepticism. Van Til openly admitted his views resulted from his Christian presuppositions. Al-Faruqi denied a Muslim bias in his thought. This paper examines the apologetic approach of both men to assess the role of presuppositions in the thought of each. The study finds that Al-Faruqi and Van Til approached their religious apologetic from different religious presuppositions; Al-Faruqi, Islamic and Van Til, Christian. Having begun with different presuppositions they necessarily produce different religious systems and doctrines. Thus, real Muslim-Christian dialogue needs to deal with presuppositions as well as particular issues of difference.

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Ongoing conflict has clouded the nearly 1400 years of contact between Islamic and Western cultures. Religion as the root of the conflict is easy to argue.[1] Norman Daniel indicates Islam and Christianity stand counterposed, as two systems with "irreducible differences between non-negotiable doctrines . . .." (Daniel 1993, p. 335) Settled predominately by Christian nations of Europe, America is also a culture with a Christian background. However, growing secularism,[2] pluralistic views of religion, and the multi-cultural nature of the modern American populace have salted public life and social context with increasing ambivalence toward religion. Within this context the number of Muslims living in America increased significantly in the last half of the twentieth century. "Islam is believed to be the fastest growing religion in the United States today." (also Shafiq 1994, p. 105; Stone 1991, p. 25) Conservative estimates put the number of Muslims at 3-4 million in 1991 or about 1.5% of the population. Estimates place the number at 100,000 to 450,000 in 1960. (see also Al-Faruqi 1998c, p. 331; Dye 2000, p. 1)

The Islamic image in the American media is one of a threat to the security and welfare of the West, including America. (Esposito 1995, p. xiii-xv) Following the World Trade center bombing in 1993 American headlines emphasized that a hostile Islam had brought the conflict within America itself.[3] The Muslim population growth,

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[1] John Esposito is clearly an advocate for greater reconciliation and understanding of Islamic ideas and culture in the West. However, even as a peacemaker he recognizes that real differences exist. "Islam's early expansion and success constituted a challenge theologically, politically, and culturally which proved a stumbling block to understanding, and a threat to the Christian West." [emphasis mine - ERD] (Esposito 1995, p. 25)

[2] 'Secularism' defined as "indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations." (Mish 1986, p. 1061)

[3] John Esposito writes, "Belief in an impending clash between the Muslim world and the West was reflected in America by headlines and television programs such as 'A Holy War Heads Our Way' and 'Jihad in America.'" (Esposito 1995, p. 189)

international politics, and development of petroleum-commerce with the nations of the Middle East have forced Islam upon the attention of the American public. The potential for conflict and opposing religious ideas have made the term 'Islamic', like the term 'radical Christian right', a broad negative brush to paint and dismiss a widely diverse religious movement. This tendency indicates the ascendance of secularism and its resistance to religion in public life, as the real opposition to both Islam and Christianity in American culture.

Over the past decade the American Army has taken into its ranks its first two Muslim chaplains. This is in response to the growing number of Muslims in American society and to the conscious commitment on the part of military religious leaders to uphold the constitutional rights to the 'free exercise of religion.' Religious plurality and 'free exercise of religion' have potential for conflict in any society, especially one like the military with its need for close order and discipline. Exposure and education are means to build a basis for mutual understanding and institutional toleration of diverse religious practices.[4] It will be my privilege soon to promote those means as an instructor in World Religions in the training center for US Army chaplains.

Therefore my purpose in this work is threefold: First, to inform my own understanding of comparative issues in Muslim-Christian relations. Second, to demonstrate that real dialogue concerning the modern conflict between Islamic and Christian thought must include a discussion of basic presuppositions for each system. Third, to accomplish both I will compare and contrast the basic apologetic methods of Islamic thinker Ismail R. Al-Faruqi and Christian apologist Cornelius Van Til. My procedure in accomplishing this work will be: first, I will give justification for selecting

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[4] In light of the political issues of the modern world, I agree with Dr. Kate Zebiri who gives four reasons why "the interrelationship between Christianity and Islam is of particular interest." 1) They contain together about one half the world's population. 2) They both are missionary in character. 3) They both make exclusive, universal and final claims. 4) They have a long history of antagonism and conflict. (Zebiri 1997, p. 5)

Al-Faruqi and Van Til for my comparison study. Next, I will demonstrate how Al-Faruqi and Van Til both root their apologetic methods in respective faith presuppositions. Then, I will present selected comparative doctrines to show how their methods effect specific issues. I will finish with some observations on the future of Muslim-Christian relations.

Chapter One

Ismail R. Al-Faruqi and Cornelius Van Til

Ismail R. Al-Faruqi (b. 1921- d. 1986) a Muslim scholar was a Palestinian American who became a refugee immigrant to the United States with the founding of the State of Israel in 1948.[5] His teaching career extended from 1958-86; in Canada at McGill University, in Pakistan at the Institute for Islamic Research, Chicago University, Syracuse University in New York and Temple University in Philadelphia ('68-'86). He formally trained in Western philosophy with extensive study in Islam (Al-Azhar, Egypt), Christianity (McGill University), and Judaism (McGill University). Al-Faruqi has a written legacy of over 25 books and 100 shorter works in the field of Islamic Studies and Comparative Religions.[6] He was a frequently requested lecturer and participant in conferences, universities, mosques, and inter-faith meetings in the United States and across the Middle East. Confrontational in his style (Zebiri 1997, p. 139), Al-Faruqi's writings contain extended critique of fundamentalist and traditionalist Muslim understanding of Islam, Zionism[7], Christianism[8], and general Western misunderstanding of Islam.

"Al-Faruqi saw the world through the prism of his Islamic faith and commitment." (Esposito 1991, p. 73) His intense commitment to Islam inspired his students and was

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[5] Most of this introductory material on Al-Faruqi comes as a summary of common information from several sources. (Esposito 1991, p. 65-79; Shafiq 1994, p. 1-44; Siddiqui 1998, p. vii-xxix)

[6] His colleagues felt that had Al-Faruqi not turned his concentration toward Islamic Studies, his thought may have served as a foundation for a whole school of thinking in Comparative Religions. (Shafiq 1994, p. 13)

[7] It was a frequent topic and one full book length discussion in his writing. (Al-Faruqi 1980b)

influential in the foundation and development of several Muslim associations. (Shafiq 1994, p. x-xi, xv, & xvii) The Muslim Student Association, The Association of Muslim Social Scientists, The International Institute of Islamic Thought, The American Islamic College, and Islamic Youth Movement all benefited from his teaching, support and criticism at times. (Shafiq 1994, p. 21-31) Through these movements he left another legacy by promoting the 'Islamization of Knowledge'[9] and the necessity for *Da'wah* (mission or witness)[10] bringing the world to Islam.

His universal vision and call to worldwide mission brought Al-Faruqi into conflict with Christianity's similar universal message. Through extensive study of Christianity while at McGill University ('58-'61?), Al-Faruqi concluded that Western Christianity was a corruption of the pure message of the Prophet Jesus; and that Islam itself is 'Christianity' and the Muslim the 'true Christian'.[11] Al-Faruqi's critique of Christianity is recognized as probably the best by a modern Muslim presently available. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. VII; Esposito 1991, p. 71-2; Zebiri 1997, p. 139) A frequent contributor in meetings or writings on Muslim-Christian relations, his view of Christianity comes from the historical-critical analysis of the Biblical text.[12] His approach is acceptable to

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[8] A term Al-Faruqi coined to refer to the Pauline and Western corruption of Christianity. Christianity was the message of Jesus as reconstructed via critical studies. (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 63-75)

[9] A recognition of and production of Islamic educational materials promoting the unity of knowledge which comes to humanity through the two sources of knowledge: revelation and the world. Since Allah is One, all knowledge is one; revelation and reason cannot contradict each other for both come from God. (Shafiq 1994, p. 90-98)

[10] By *Da'wah* a revival of Islam will come to Europe and North America. (Shafiq 1994, p. 45-66) *Da'wah* is the active effort to bring the message of Islam to the non-Muslim; and the only reason for a Muslim to stay in a non-Muslim country according to Al-Faruqi. He saw America as the 'New Medina' for a worldwide Islamic movement. (Al-Faruqi 1983, p. 267-270)

[11] That is Islam is the advancement and final revelation to mankind of God's will; which was also given to other prophets like Abraham, Moses and Jesus. A message corrupted by Paul and the Western church. Thus, Muslims believe what all true prophets have taught. God is One and we must obey him. (Al-Faruqi 1998f, p. 191; Al-Faruqi 1998h, p. 244)

[12] Hendrick Kraemer recognized this as the main reason Al-Faruqi's treatment of Christianity deserves our appreciation. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. VII) Also evident by Al-Faruqi's use of critical language in analyzing Christian theology and Biblical texts, such as several "distinct sources for Christian doctrine" (p. 30), evangelists having "ascribed to Jesus meanings" (p. 31), Gnosticism as a "source" for Christian theology (p. 35) (Al-Faruqi 1998d), and citing a Biblical J source (Al-Faruqi 1998f, p. 182).

his Islamic perspective on Christianity, but never a way to view Islam and the Qur'an. (Zebiri 1997, p. 172-174) A review of the modern Christian sources in Al-Faruqi's bibliographical material, reveals all come from modernist or neo-modernist schools.

A Protestant Christian of the Reformed tradition, Van Til (b. 1895 - d. 1987) emigrated to the United States with his parents from Holland at age ten. [13] Van Til studied the philosophical school of idealism at Princeton University, as well as completing theological training at Calvin and Princeton Seminaries in the United States. Van Til wrote 22 books; 183 articles, reviews, and pamphlets; and had 17 printed Class Syllabi on subjects of Christian Theology, Apologetics, and interaction with modern thought.[14] Van Til spent nearly his whole professional life (1928-1979) teaching apologetics at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. Colleagues attach many superlatives to Van Til's contributions to the field of Christian apologetics defending Christianity in light of modernist thinking. John Frame assesses the place of Van Til by stating, "Van Til is perhaps the most important Christian thinker since Calvin." (Frame 1995, p. 44; Geehan 1971a, vii-viii; Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley 1984, p. 184)

Despite the range and significant issues Van Til addressed in his numerous works they have had limited circulation. I think this is due in part to his severe criticism and bold defense of historic Christianity in the face of a church enraptured with the discoveries of critical studies of the Scriptures. John Frame in *Cornelius Van Til* (p. 34-37) cites four reasons for his relative isolation from the Christian church at large. First, he was a Dutchman forced by circumstance to work in an American environment. Second, was his confrontational style in analysis and argument. In his writing not only theological modernists, but Roman Catholic and inconsistent Protestants received negative analysis by Van Til as inadequate explanations of Biblical Christianity. "He was not in dialogue with these other types of theology; he confronted them." (Frame 1995, p. 35-36) While other evangelical scholars were trying to speak with and into the mainstream of

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[13] Elements of this section are summarized from Dr. John Frame's *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought.* (Frame 1995, p. 19-47)

'Christian' thought, Van Til tried to bring all conceptualizations of truth to the bar of God's self-revelation in the Bible. Further, Van Til used a complex philosophical language and communications style. The writer himself has found reading and understanding Van Til's material hard going.[15] Finally, Van Til held his ordination as a minister in the very small Orthodox Presbyterian Church. A context John Frame notes, where Van Til never had the benefit of interaction outside those circles in which he worked which would have given a wider circulation to his thought. (Frame 1995, p. 34-37) His conservative evangelical understanding of Christianity, confrontational approach, and relative isolation of his thought would have made Van Til an unlikely invitee to Muslim-Christian dialogue meetings. Christian participants in the ongoing Muslim-Christian dialogue have tended to come from a broader religious perspective.[16] They are generally sympathetic to critical theories on the text of the Bible. As a result more conservative-traditionalist Christians have not had much input into Muslim-Christian dialogue.[17]

In the context of the Christian debates of the late 1930's in American Christianity; Van Til has been called 'the consolidator of the Machen Reformation' in opposition to liberalism. (Frame 1995, p. 39-44) Several of Van Til's former students have maintained such an ardent devotion to his thought to be called 'movement Van Tillians'.

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[14] An extensive listing of these works may be found in *Jerusalem and Athens*. (Geehan 1971b, p. 492-8)

[15] Dr. John Frame assesses this problem may be the cause; for Van Til's reluctance to publish, lack of analysis of the sources he quotes, the repetitious nature of his pedagogy, the problems of organizing his ideas, and most of his critics problems arising from confusion about just what he did teach. (Frame 1995, p. 29-37)

[16] Christian participants generally come from theological systems categorized as 'inclusivist' and 'pluralist'; rather than 'exclusivist'. (Zebiri 1997, p. 33-34) Van Til would certainly be an 'extreme exclusivist' by Zebiri's definition, a position she says "is relatively rare among theologians." (Zebiri 1997, p. 34) I have not found this the case from my exposure to a wide range of Christian denominations as a military chaplain in the US Armed Forces. Also I have served in three foreign duty locations with contacts with local national clergy. From these experiences I would contradict calling such a position rare, particularly among American Christians. It may be 'rare' in university academic circles where critical theories of interpretation are the accepted norm. Muslim-Christian dialogue advocates need to find a way of bringing together the more confrontational thinkers of both sides like Al-Faruqi and Van Til.

[17] However, this is true from the conservative-traditionalist Muslim perspective too. (Zebiri 1997, p. 38)

Among them other theological movements have grown up like 'theonomy' and 'Christian reconstructionism'. (Frame 1995, p. 8-18) Some of these advocates have had a significant influence on what the American media call, 'the conservative Christian Right'. Through the interaction of these movements Van Tillians in American Christianity and involvement in arguing for greater influence of faith issues in public life, Van Til's influence has spread often without his name attached.

Add to these personal accomplishments the commonalties that both Al-Faruqi and Van Til were immigrants to the United States with significant influence from their parent cultures; both studied and earned PhD's in philosophy at American universities; and as professors in the field of religion, one Islamic Studies and the other Christian Theology, Al-Faruqi and Van Til were roughly professional contemporaries. Their teaching careers overlapped by about twenty-one years, eleven of which both taught at separate institutions in the city of Philadelphia. These factors together peaked my personal interest to do this comparison of their apologetic methodologies.

Chapter Two

Apologetic Approach of Isma'il R. Al-Faruqi

Isma'il R. Al-Faruqi was an apologist and advocate for Islam. Hendrik Kraemer, Professor Emeritus at the University of Leiden, says Al-Faruqi is a "committed Muslim modernist and distinguished scholar." He calls Al-Faruqi's book *Christian Ethics* "a phenomenon in modern Muslim apologetic literature." (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. vii) Involved in interfaith dialogue for over 30 years, he was recognized as a worthy representative of his own faith and as gracious, though tenacious, in opposition.[18] (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. VI & IX; Cragg 1992, p. 127-8 & 146)

In this section I will deal with Al-Faruqi's religious presuppositions. I will lay out Al-Faruqi's Comparative Religions approach to apologetics and examine what this means for evaluating religious truth claims. I will then look at his understanding of innate human knowledge of God and the corresponding place of intuition in knowledge of truth.

I begin with Al-Faruqi's Comparative Religions approach and what it tells us about his religious presuppositions. Al-Faruqi's confrontational style arose from his Comparative Religions approach to truth.[19] He argues his critique of Christianity in *Christian Ethics* is "neither a 'Muslim's' nor an 'Islamic' critique, but a human critique," even an "absolute critique." (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 32) In his critique Al-Faruqi believes "he has established a totally objective and unbiased point from which to judge Christianity" and, by implication, other religions as well. (Marshall 1988, p. 10) He

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[18] Fazlur Rahman coveys the description of Al-Faruqi as a 'guerrilla scholar' by "members of the School of Divinity of Chicago." (Shafiq 1994, p. 9)

sees his arguments as strictly "rational and critical" and only refutable on "error of reasoning." (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 32) Clearly Al-Faruqi would have objected to someone calling him an 'Islamic apologist' or his arguments those of a "Muslim apologetic" (as in Kraemer's comment above). However, was Al-Faruqi's apologetic 'Islamic'; that is, based on Islamic presuppositions?

Al-Faruqi used his studies in Comparative Religions to discover universal principles to evaluate all religions. He thought that any religion, worthy to be called a true religion, conceives of itself as the 'universal message'; not one probable truth among many. "There is no culture which does not make a meta-cultural claim to truth, to goodness and beauty."[20] (Al-Faruqi 1980a, p. 4) He saw the task of the scholar or student of religions as a search for principles that are "truly universal" and that "correspond with reality" to evaluate truth claims. (Al-Faruqi 1980a, p. 4)

Dr. Al-Faruqi knew others rejected his Comparative Religions approach to truth. "Orthodox and conservative adherents of any religion" rejected it in the belief that no one could understand another religion apart from the life-commitment of that religion. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 8) Most comparativists and phenomenologists stopped short in their study of religion. They were satisfied with mere reportage of the data of religions. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 9-10) They made no attempt to evaluate, rank or reconcile contradictory and competing claims to truth. Al-Faruqi argued that in doing this they acquiesce to "the ghost of relativism" and religion becomes tribal prejudice. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 10) A Christian comparativist like Kraemer, according to Al-Faruqi, reduced religions to a core of irreducible presuppositions and then, simply asked, "Which presuppositions?" To Al-Faruqi, such a method resulted in Comparative Religions becoming a branch of missiology. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 39-41) He argued most modern comparativists only recognized metareligion "in the form of presuppositions." They

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[19] As to 'confrontational style' Al-Faruqi wrote, "Falsehood can and must never be tolerated. The only response of which it is worthy is refutation, absolute rejection." (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 35)

[20] Al-Faruqi grants that "Islam certainly makes this claim, namely, that it purports to speak for all humans and for all times." (Al-Faruqi 1980a, p. 4)

also questioned the possibility of escaping those presuppositions to find neutral principles for evaluation. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 39) Doing so would capitulate to relativism, deny knowing truth itself, and lead only to cynical skepticism. Al-Faruqi rejected such inability. (Marshall 1988, p. 10) He asserted, "The human mind is capable of going outside itself in order to examine itself. A fortiori, it must be able to go outside an existential situation." (emphasis mine-ERD Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 40) Al-Faruqi believed his approach was successful in escaping his Islamic presuppositions.

Comparative Religion analysis had "a particularly serious task to perform." (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 10) In a rapidly shrinking world where religio-cultures are coming into increasing social contact and interdependence, it is impossible to grant all the competing truth-claims of the world's religions. Some way of promoting inter-religious harmony and evaluating truth-claims between faiths must be found. If not, increasing conflict between religio-cultures would be the inevitable consequence. Al-Faruqi believed Comparative Religions study could determine ultimate values, both individual values and values in the context of other values. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 10) Thus, Comparative Religion analysis could lead to ranked values within, and even between, different religions. (Al-Faruqi 1998l, p. 71-92) Taking action based on the results of such analysis, would lead to a reduction of intercultural and even international conflicts. That is an idealistic, but certainly a noble hope for humankind.

Al-Faruqi recognized discerning ultimate principles of evaluation was a difficult task. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 10) The search for principles required going against the flow of modern thought. He conceded that the idea of exclusive truth is repugnant to modern human thinking. (Al-Faruqi 1998h, p. 246-7) Such a search also required entering into an oppositional bias to one's own basic belief systems; and finding an "empathy with the data" to understand another religious belief system. (Al-Faruqi 1981, p. 13)

Such analysis and discernment of evaluative principles would only be possible through 'dialogue' between faiths, but dialogue of a particular kind. First, the dialogue must

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recognize its end is conversion to 'the truth', what I will call 'Truth'.[21] Second it must

have rules for its critical analysis. Third, its presuppositions must be few and simple.

(Al-Faruqi 1998h, p. 249) Presuppositions are very important to this dialogue,

because as Al-Faruqi asserts, one's "attitude toward the data studied determines the

outcome of the study." (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 33; Al-Faruqi 1981, p. 12) He viewed

presuppositions as "critical" to ending "cynicism" in finding 'Truth'. (Al-Faruqi 1967,

p. 33) The process of 'dialogue' was long term for Al-Faruqi. He clearly believed

success was beyond the ability of the present generation. However, to accomplish such

a worthy task, we needed to begin the work now. (Al-Faruqi 1998h, p. 255)

Al-Faruqi proposed six "principles of meta-religion" to evaluate the truth-claims of all

religion. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 22-31; Siddiqui 1998, p. xx-xxi) I will list these

principles that he called "presuppositions of analysis." (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 32) By

these principles Al-Faruqi proposed to evaluate the 'Truth' in all religions. Greater or

lesser conformity to these principles meant a corresponding assessment of truth or

falsehood. We find the six principles on page 22-31 of *Christian Ethics*. The first

principle is that 'Being' is of two realms, the ideal and actual. To deny the ideal

reduces all things to a chaotic stream of unrelated particulars. The ideal puts the

particulars of the actual into orderliness. The second principle is that ideal being is

relevant to actual being. Simply put this means the ideal gives the actual meaning. The

third principle says the ideal is relevant to the actual as command. Ideals fall into a

hierarchy of value whether an individual obeys or not; yet the ideal depends on man's

active obedience for realization in the actual. The fourth principle says that actual being

is good. Ideal being seeks realization in the actual. Actual being is better than non-

being; and this world, is the realm of actual being. If actual being can realize the ideal

and the ideal is good, then this world is good and to be in it is good. Any religion that

claims the world is evil or perverse is false. The fifth principle says that actual being is

malleable. Realization of values or moral action causing the actual to embody the ideal

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[21] Al-Faruqi maintained that a 'history of religions' approach must maintain a "priority
of truth to Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist claims to the truth" or else it

is possible. Of course this means the actual may be set in opposition to the ideal as well. The final principle says that perfection of the cosmos is a human burden only. All the rest of creation exists determined in the realm of the actual by the ideals. Only human beings have the ability to alter the course of necessity in the cosmos and the responsibility for doing so. Ataullah Siddiqui says Al-Faruqi "strongly believes this [the Six Principles] provides overall principles that are not 'constrained by any religious tradition' or through which any religious tradition can be judged." (Siddiqui 1998, p. xx) In these 'Six Principles' Al-Faruqi believed he had discovered the neutral principles for evaluating all religions.

No matter how much Al-Faruqi asserted the purely 'rational' and 'human' character of his apologetic, his Islamic presuppositions are manifest in his 'Six Principles'. In other texts Al-Faruqi presents Islam as a "theology-free meta-religion" pleading with other religions. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 3) There he also presents the underlying principles of Islam. 1) Reality is dual; transcendent, divine and creatorly, but also phenomenal, profane and creaturely. 2) The divine is relevant to the profane. 3) Human beings have causal efficacy to shape creation after the divine will. 4) Human beings are to serve the divine by actually realizing the divine will in creation. 5) Fate is determined by fulfilling of the divine will. (Al-Faruqi 1974, p. 244-5) These principles of Islam are clearly parallel to the 'Six Principles' of meta-religion. He used the same litany of ideas in his presentation of *Tawhid* (the unity of God) in his last work *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*. 1) Duality—reality of two kinds or orders. 2) Ideationality—relation between two orders of is ideational in nature. 3) Teleology—creator's will realized in creation means the world is a 'cosmos' (an orderly creation) not a 'chaos'. 4) Capacity of Man and Malleability of Nature—fulfillment of purpose of creation must be possible, a realization of the 'absolute'. 4) Responsibility and Judgment—human beings are responsible and accountable for bringing creation into the order of the divine will (the ideal). (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 74-6 & also compare 'Religions of

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is doomed. (Al-Faruqi 1998f, p. 185)

Mesopotamia' p. 45) I cannot avoid the conclusion; Al-Faruqi's 'Six Principles of Meta-Religion' parallel his foundational principles of Islam almost point-for-point.

It is of note that these 'principles' are evident in his earliest writings, such as *Urubah* and *Christian Ethics*, all the way through to his last, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* . This shows consistency of thought throughout his life and publications in this area.[22] It may be that Al-Faruqi viewed Islam as 'The Meta-religion' that God gave by which religions should be judged. However, he presented his 'meta-religion principles' as 'theology-free' and his arguments as purely 'rational'. Using Al-Faruqi's principles as the basis for evaluation, only Islam comes out giving 'Truth'. Other religions are only 'true' as they approximate Islam's basic presuppositions or as reinterpreted by a scholar like Al-Faruqi using the 'principles' as a critical grid. Al-Faruqi's argument that he may only be refuted on "error of reasoning," would require starting from his presuppositions. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 32) Since Al-Faruqi called these 'meta-religion principles' the "presuppositions of analysis" and believed Islam corresponded to his "theology-free meta-religion", we cannot avoid the 'Islamic' label for his apologetic. If this is true, Al-Farqui's apologetic leads to the same end as that of other comparativists. His religious system is built on different presuppositions, following more or less reasonable arguments, to predictably different beliefs and ultimate ends.

Is there another way in Al-Faruqi's apologetic to remove the differences in presupposition? Al-Faruqi believed that God created all human beings with an innate inborn human capability for knowledge of divine transcendence. (Al-Faruqi 1992, p. 23) Beyond mere capability of knowledge Al-Faruqi also asserted, "Behind religious diversity stands *al-din-al-hanif*, the primordial religion of God with which all men are born before acculturation makes them adherents of this or that religion." (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 79) 'Hanifism' became Al-Faruqi's term to describe the

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[22] Most of his colleagues and opponents see a pattern of development in Al-Faruqi's thinking in other areas. He himself admits a transformation of his thinking about Islam's role in the modern world. This came after his initial contact and involvement with the Muslim Student Association in 1965. (Esposito 1991, p.66-7; Shafiq 1994, p. 21-2; Siddiqui 1998, p. xiv & xxi-xxiv)

elements of 'Truth' he finds in all religions and specifically, in the most noble adherents to those religions. (Siddiqui 1998, xvii-xviii) 'Hanifism' came to particular expression in Mesopotamia with the "rediscovery" of monotheism. It came to fullest expression in what he called *Urubah* (Arabness) which he fully expounded in his work by that same name. (Al-Faruqi 1962) For Al-Faruqi this was not a nationalistic nor a purely linguistic term, but a religious one describing successive movements of monotheistic belief in a transcendent God . 'Hanifs' carried the specifics of "Semitic religious consciousness, from Sargon of Akkad to Abraham and Moses and finally to Jesus." (Al-Faruqi 1998g, p. 42) He saw the clearest expressions of these movements in Abrahamic Judaism; the primitive Christianity of Jesus; finally and fully expressed in Islam. (Siddiqui 1998, p. xiii-xix) Religious knowledge of the particulars of this 'primordial religion' comes to people by intuition insights, exercises of the rational soul, and culturally specific revelation given by God.

Intuition insight opened up perception of the transcendence of God according to Al-Faruqi. This may come via the endless interplay between Quranic descriptions of God's attributes and the continual denials that they are sufficient to describe God as He is.[23] (Al-Faruqi 1992, p. 26-7; Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 216) The sense of ordered values, the 'moral law' or precepts of God's will, may be perceived apart from revelation as facts by "a priori emotional intuition." (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 262) The prophets understood right values by "emotional intuition," just like any other person, but have quantitatively more understanding. (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 264) Al-Faruqi held arabesque art and calligraphy were also means leading to an 'intuition' of infinity. That intuition confirms the inexpressibility of God in terms of nature. (Al-Faruqi 1998g, p. 72) However, what people know by intuition is God's will not God himself. God "cannot

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[23] Al-Faruqi gives several examples of this Quranic interplay like; "99 or more names for God expressing His Lordship of the world, and His Providence in it; but it emphasized that 'Nothing is like unto Him' (42:11)." Also, "If all trees were pens and all seas were ink with which to record God's speech," (31:27); it asserted, "they would be exhausted before God's speech runs out" (18:109). Or, "The light of God is that of heaven and earth. Its likeness is the light of a lamp whose glass is a celestial star, whose fuel is from a blessed olive tree that is neither of the East or the West, incandescent without fire . . ." (24:35). (Al-Faruqi 1992, p. 25-6)

be the object of intuition." (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 252) Intuition is not rational and critical argumentation, but argumentation on impression, feeling, sense or gut-reaction. It is only 'rational' and 'critical' if based on Al-Faruqi's presupposition of religion.

In *Al Tawhid* Al-Faruqi stated that the Qur'an teaches a human being has a soul composed of two parts: an animal component and a rational component. The rational component constitutes the mind that is the human capacity for "knowledge of nature, of God and His will, strong enough to be trustworthy—indeed to substitute for revelation or to be its equal." This rational component for Al-Faruqi exists in all human beings and constitutes their essential humanity as created in God's image. (Al-Faruqi 1992, p. 70-1) However, capacity to know God and His will, does not necessarily mean knowledge of God and His will. Also Al-Faruqi did not develop a rational argument for the rational component of the human soul. He presented it as an assertion of dogma.

In Al-Faruqi's thought revelation "was not necessary . . .," but was given to assist human understanding. (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 262) The truth the prophets proclaimed came to them by reason, as well as by intuition insight. Therefore, reason and revelation are both avenues to knowledge and correct understanding of truth. (Al-Faruqi 1981, p. 5-6) According to Islam the phenomena of prophecy are universal but "each prophet is restricted by the ability of his recipients to receive his communication." (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 264; Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 193) Thus, all religions contain aspects of truth delivered according to the context of their adherents. Here we find Al-Faruqi's 'Islamic presupposition' again. He analyzes the essence of various religious experiences by the same 'Six Principles of Meta-religion' and basic principles of Islam. (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 45) I cannot but conclude that, for Al-Faruqi, Islam is the final revelation of God and is the standard to evaluate other religions. The modern Islamic scholar must study nature via science and God's Holy Book to discover God's pattern. "God is Author of both; and both of His works are public, appealing to no other authority other than that of reason and understanding." (Al-Faruqi 1981, p. 17-8) Revelation, is something of a shortcut to truth; the

heightened reasonable and intuition insights of the prophets that would be equally discoverable by sufficient study and reflection. By such study and reflection one will come to perceive the truth and also the principles to evaluate the truth claims of other religions. Revelation then leads to no greater certainty than the heightened innate knowledge and intuition insight of prophets. Revelation understood in this way, is no more 'rational' or 'critical' than the same intuition insights of ordinary individuals.

Here I draw two conclusions. First, "innate knowledge" and "intuition insight" are not the self-evident elements of a philosophy by critical and rational argument; but rather are presuppositions of dogma. This is the very thing which Al-Faruqi denied grounded his apologetic. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 31-2) Second, for Al-Faruqi revelation rests on greater prophetic "innate knowledge" and intuition insight. Is innate and intuition knowledge not an assertion of dogma? This does not disprove Al-Faruqi's apologetic arguments for the 'Truth' of Islam; that was not my intent. I wanted to demonstrate Al-Faruqi's Comparative Religions apologetic rests on 'Islamic' presuppositions.

Chapter Three

The Apologetic Method of Cornelius Van Til

Van Til clearly took a presuppositional approach to apologetics. In this section I will set forth Van Til's argument for the necessity of a 'presuppositional' approach to apologetics. I will review his approach as set forth by him and commentators on his work.

Van Til considered it an obligation as a Reformed[24] apologist to "frankly admit that his own methodology presupposes the truth of Christian theism." (Van Til 1976, p. 61) Extensive portions of Van Til's writings give critique to 'traditional' or 'classical'; as well as inconsistently 'Christian' or 'Reformed' methods of apologetics. Such methods begin by finding some point of common agreement with the 'natural man' or 'non-Christian' on the object and process of religious knowledge. Contrary to these 'less-Biblical' approaches the Reformed apologist disagrees with the 'natural man' on "the nature of the object of knowledge" and "method to be employed in acquiring knowledge." (Van Til 1976, p. 61) Van Til considered the only consistently Christian method of defense for Christianity was by analyzing the presuppositions underlying differing conceptions of truth. (Van Til 1967a, p. 99; Van Til 1976, p. 61)

Van Til is not unique in approaching the defense of Christianity on the basis of presuppositions. Al-Faruqi complained that other comparativists, specifically Hendrick Kraemer, did so and generally abstained from evaluation of different religious systems. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 39-41) Van Til differs in that he believed that presuppositions revealed the greater or lesser rationality of a system of thought. Ultimately he held that

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[24] 'Reformed' is a particular Protestant perspective on Christian theology compared to Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Modernist or Arminian; generally aligned with the thought of the Reformer, John Calvin.

without a Christian theistic presupposition, not only religion, but all reasoning about the world was defective. Everything would end up on the plate of Chance, nothing could be certain, everything was in constant flux, and skepticism about truth was the only option. In John Frame's extended analysis of Van Til's approach he remarks that Van Til's apologetic and theology were of "Copernican dimensions" for Christian thought. Frame parallels the effect Van Til's Christian theory of knowledge had on Christian theology to the effect Kant had on the secular theory of knowledge. (Frame 1976, p. 3 & 5) Even those who opposed Van Til's presuppositional approach have recognized him as "without a doubt, the leading exponent of presuppositionalism.. . . Van Tillianism is almost a synonym for presuppositionalism, though the school is much broader than any one thinker." (Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley 1984, p. 183) By his own confession then, Van Til took a presuppositional approach to his apologetic. Now we ask, 'Why?'

A two-fold problem on the theory of human knowledge grounded Van Til's defense in the presuppositions of Christian Theism: the point-of-contact with the unbeliever and the methodology to defend Christianity. First, he asks what point-of-contact may the Christian appeal to in the heart and mind of the unbeliever to convince him/her of the 'Truth'? (Van Til 1967a, p. 67) Unlike in past history, modern people have come to recognize no general arbitrator between the various theories about human nature. Van Til agrees with Ernest Cassirer's assessment of human nature in his *An Essay on Man*. "To combine and unify all these particular aspects and perspectives [on the nature of man] was impossible. . . The personal factor became more and more prevalent, and the temperament of the individual writer tended to play a decisive role." (Van Til 1967a, p. 68) The apologist must consider the perspective of the hearer to know, whether what he/she wants to say will be understood in the way the apologist intends it. "Christianity then must present itself as the light that makes the facts of human experience, and above all the nature of man himself, to appear for what they really are." (Van Til 1967a, p. 69) In attempting to communicate to the non-Christian most Christian apologists deformed to different degrees the Christian theory of human nature trying to find a

common denominator. What they ended up communicating was a non-Christian theory of human nature, in whole or in part. The chief problem was in ascribing "ultimacy or self-sufficiency to the mind of man." (Van Til 1967a, p. 69-90) If the human mind is ultimate, we are precisely back at our starting point; a variety of different perspectives about human nature and no universal principle to evaluate them. One then becomes caught in a circle leading to no solution, short of pure personal preference.

The consistently Reformed apologist holds to the derived nature of man's mind. I will summarize Van Til from his *The Defense of the Faith*. page 90-95.

The mind of man, as a created thing is "naturally in contact with God's revelation. It is surrounded by nothing but revelation. It is itself inherently revelational. It cannot naturally be conscious of itself without being conscious of its creatureliness." "God-consciousness," was for Adam "a presupposition of the significance of his reasoning on anything." God gave supernatural interpretation of human purpose by giving human beings his command with respect to the created world. History became significant for human beings. It was the human reinterpretation of God's natural revelation and the organization of human life and influence in the world according to God's command. To reinterpret the world, individually and collectively, human beings had to continually reflect on the interpretation God gave. That interpretation came to humanity through human nature, the created world, and supernatural communication. Human beings were to obey God's command; and by obedience come to know more about their own human nature, God, and the Creation. "Man's very constitution as a rational and moral being is itself revelational to man as the ethically responsible reactor to revelation. And natural revelation is itself incomplete. It needed from the outset to be supplemented with supernatural revelation about man's future.. . . man may be said to be by his original constitution <u>in contact with the truth while yet not in possession of all the truth</u>." [emphasis mine-ERD] "Man had originally not merely a capacity for receiving the truth; he was in actual possession of the truth. The world of truth was not found in some realm far distant from him; it was right before him. That which spoke to

his senses no less than that which spoke to his intellect was the voice of God." (Van Til 1967a)

Van Til cited Romans 1:19-21 to show human beings as originally created knew God. Knowing God humankind rebelled and refused to glorify God as God. (Van Til 1967a, p. 92) Here enters the Christian doctrine of the Fall of Man in Van Til's thought. Human beings know God; ought to see Him writ large in a variety of ways in Creation; but are alone guilty and responsible for denying or refusing to recognize that revelation. There is no lack in human nature or in the revelation in Creation. Man's refusal to recognize God is the result of willful transgression. (Van Til 1967a, p. 92) The presuppositions of Christian Theism are necessary to take such a position on human nature. Van Til maintained apart from such presuppositions modern people have no ground for their ideas about human nature. We become stuck in the vicious circle of a constantly changing variety of personal interpretations about human nature. Changing theories of knowledge and understanding mean changing standards for evaluating truth-claims when the human mind is ultimate. On the other hand the point-of-contact for the consistent Reformed apologist rests in the knowledge of God in man's own nature and the interpretation God Himself has given of His Creation. The Reformed apologist

> "is assured of a point of contact in the fact that every man is made in the image of God and has impressed upon him the law of God. In that fact alone he may rest secure with respect to the point of contact problem. For that fact makes men always accessible to God. That fact assures us that every man, to be a man at all, must already be in contact with the truth. He is so much in contact with the truth that much of his energy is spent in the vain effort to hide this fact from himself. His efforts to hide this fact from himself are bound to be self-frustrative.... Man, knowing God, refuses to keep God in remembrance." (Van Til 1967a, p. 94-95)

The consistently Christian apologist "must seek his point of contact with the natural man in that which is beneath the threshold of his working consciousness, in the sense

of deity which he seeks to suppress." (Van Til 1967a, p. 98) This brings us to the question of the methodology in Van Til's apologetic.

Van Til's methodology is that of a head-on collision between the Christian and non-Christian system. (Van Til 1967a, p. 99) Created in the image of God all human beings have the sense of deity. They are part of a Creation in which God has inscribed Himself large. However, because of the Fall, human beings attempt to suppress the 'Truth' of God staring them in the face. The non-Christian or non-theist, starting from a non-Biblical presupposition, may construct a plausible system of interpretation of reality. Other Christian apologetic systems build their connection with non-Christian systems based on this ability to construct plausible systems. (Van Til 1967a, p. 96-98) Such a Christian or non-Christian system can never "appear *more* than plausible." (Van Til 1967a, p. 98) Only the consistent-Christian system will be in accord with the facts of reality. The consistent Christian sees a different object of knowledge and method in acquiring knowledge than the natural man. "All facts of nature and of history are what they are, do what they do and undergo what they undergo, in accord with the one comprehensive counsel of God. All that may be known by man is already known by God. And it is already known by God because it is controlled by God." (Van Til 1967a, p. 99) Van Til sees everything happening in accord with the plan of God, a plan unfolding in the events of history. The non-Christian system holds that no such plan exists.[25]

Let me analyze what Van Til is saying concerning the non-Christian systems, as I understand it. In the non-Christian view laws of cause-and-effect or random events of Chance determine what happens in the world. Reasoning by cause and effect, particular effects are analyzed to discover their causes. Then, these causes become effects that must be analyzed for their more general or abstract causes. This process continues *ad infinitum* or at some point capitulates to an authoritarian declaration of

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[25] Al-Faruqi, for example, sees the Qur'an revealing God's will or command for his Creation. However, the spiritual aspect of human nature is not bound by an overall plan of God; for that would violate his responsibility for moral action and freedom to obey or disobey. (Al-Faruqi 1992, p. 61-62 & 66)

ultimate Cause (like in answers of religion). On the other hand the analyst may conclude an ultimate Cause does not exist and declares that or that it does not matter, both capitulating to irrationalism. Rationalism, therefore, requires exhaustive knowledge of all things or the ability to reason by an infinite regress to ultimate causes to make sense of the world. Random events of Chance cannot by definition be processed into a system. There are no greater causes or an ultimate Cause that are not themselves one of the events. What happens, happens. The events have no discernible ultimate purpose or meaning outside themselves. Irrationalism, then, to systematize random events would require the human mind to be able to comprehend an infinite number of events and the infinite possible meaning they each have. The human mind reasoning from itself is incapable of such comprehensive knowledge. Thus, both rationalism and irrationalism require exhaustive knowledge of all that is, and some ability to structure such exhaustive knowledge into a system. If Van Til is correct, all non-Christian systems end up in a constant interchange between rationalism and irrationalism; but, never come to rest on a certainty. The Christian theistic system, however says Van Til, begins with the presupposition of an infinite God who is "exhaustively comprehensible to himself." (Frame 1976, p. 8) *"God, therefore, has a 'systematic' knowledge of himself and of the world, since he knows His own plan exhaustively and since the world perfectly conforms to that plan."* [Italics original in text—ERD] (Frame 1976, p. 8-9) Man's rationality is based on God's rational knowledge of himself and his plan in the world. God's knowledge is exhaustive in detail and God is the Ultimate Cause to cause-and-effect chains. Only based on this infinite comprehensive knowledge 'interpreted' or given to humankind by God, are they able to have any rational certainty of anything in the world. Therefore, Christian and non-Christian presuppositions on human knowledge are incompatible; yes, are diametrically opposed. This is why Van Til held that his methodology was on a head-on collision course with non-Christian systems.

Van Til taught analysis by presupposition was the only method for a consistent explanation of the world. "To argue by presupposition is to indicate what are the

epistemological and metaphysical principles that underlie and control one's method. The Reformed apologist will frankly admit that his own methodology presupposes the truth of Christian theism." (Van Til 1967a, p. 99-100) The charge of 'pure authoritarianism' will not stick. Because "*every* method, the supposedly neutral one no less than any other, presupposes either the truth or the falsity of Christian theism." (Van Til 1967a, p. 100) [emphasis mine—ERD] "To admit one's own presuppositions and to point out the presuppositions of others is therefore to maintain that all reasoning is, in the nature of the case, *circular reasoning*. The starting-point, the method, and the conclusion are always involved in one another." (Van Til 1967a, p. 101) Non-Christian thinkers may discover 'truths' about the world; but they will not be consistently held due to faulty presuppositions. (Van Til 1967a, p. 103) Apologetics becomes a defense of presuppositions and their answer to what exists in the world.

What gave Van Til any hope that the non-Christian reasoning from false presuppositions will ever accept the arguments of his apologetic? Van Til admitted that the tenets of Christian theism would be unacceptable to the non-Christian. The non-Christian begins from a different presupposition and will necessarily end up with a different conclusion. The Christian doctrine of the Fall and Depravity of Humanity assume this to be true. The Christian apologist also recognizes that the non-Christian will accept the argument only if God, by His Spirit, opens his eyes to the truth. The Christian apologist recognizes that the non-Christian, created in the image of God, is always accessible to God's truth. The apologist's task is to remind human beings of what they already know to be true. God must do the convincing. (Van Til 1967a, p. 104-105) What then are the specific steps of Van Til's presuppositional apologetic?

His method began with any point of interest taken up in conversation between the Christian and the non-Christian. (Frame 1995, p. 330; Pratt 1979, p. 84 & 96)[26] This

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[26] John Frame and Richard Pratt are both students and expositors of Van Til's method. (Frame 1995, p. 4 & 18) Frame outlines Van Til's method by following the process in Van Til's pamphlet, *Why I Believe In God*. Van Til wrote this pamphlet as an apologetic conversation between himself and a non-Christian non-theistic modern individual. It provides a practical example of how Van Til would see his apologetic function. Frame writes, "It is all there: presuppositions, divine sovereignty, rejection of

recognized that meaningful conservation must begin with questions of mutual interest. Eventually what the apologist believes about that issue will connect with the apologist's belief in God, since the tenets of Christian theism ground rational thought about anything. The next step was simply for the Christian apologist to admit his/her faith perspective; that he/she believes in God; and that all rational thought about anything depends on the tenets of Christian theism. (Frame 1995, p. 331; Pratt 1979, p. 96; Van Til 1967a, p. 99-101) Next, the apologist must point out that every method begins with presuppositions about Christian theism. (Van Til 1967a, p. 100) The method is "indirect rather than direct." (Van Til 1967a, p. 100) That means not debating individual "facts" or "laws," but resolving the question of the "final reference-point" that determines "what the 'facts' and 'laws' really are." (Van Til 1967a, p. 100)

At this point the apologetic may go one of two directions depending on the hearer.[27] If the hearer was open to the tenets of Christian theism, the apologist would proceed to give what he/she knows is the Biblical evidence for his/her view. Lacking the technical knowledge to answer (a specialized question of exegesis, science or philosophy), the apologist would need to explain why he/she believes the Bible contains an answer to the question. If the hearer is not open to Christian theism, the apologist assumes the position of the non-Christian for the sake of argument. The apologist does this to demonstrate how that position establishes no "facts" or "laws" as ultimate. (Van Til 1967a, p. 100) They are only facts and laws based on the non-Christian's presuppositions. Finally, the apologist asserts Christian theism alone has a basis for rational knowledge of 'Truth'. God has comprehensive knowledge of Himself and His plan for Creation. As Creator he has the ability to communicate 'true knowledge' though not comprehensive knowledge of Himself and His plan to His creature. This method of admitting presuppositions and pointing out the presuppositions of others

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neutrality, clarity of revelation, noetic effects of sin, rejection of probabilism and fideism, unbelieving views of possibility, rationalism and irrationalism, analogical reasoning, and reasoning by presupposition." (Frame 1995, p. 330-336; Van Til n. d.)

[27] Pratt calls the two directions 'Argument by Truth' and 'Argument by Folly'. My analysis is my summary of Van Til's ideas focused around these two concepts. (Pratt 1979, p. 86 & 92)

maintains "that all reasoning is, in the nature of the case, *circular reasoning*." (Van Til 1967a, p. 101) John Frame summarizes that a clash of systems usually means circularity exists on both sides. Each advocate argues for his/her system based on contradictory ultimate presuppositions. The more consistently they hold those presuppositions, the less 'common ground' they will find. "Each will claim that the other's arguments are circular." (Frame 1995, p. 304)

Both Van Til and Al-Faruqi believe their apologetic provides certainty in religious knowledge. Van Til, however, unlike Al-Faruqi clearly admits his apologetic is presuppositional in nature. He argues it must be so, for all claims to ultimate truth rest on particular presuppositions; but only the presuppositions of Christian theism are sufficient to provide a basis for reasoning about anything.

Related Doctrines in Al-Faruqi's and Van Til's Apologetic

Integrating Idea

Both Al-Faruqi and Van Til start their apologetic with definite and different presuppositions, one Islamic and the other Christian. As a result we would expect the particulars of their arguments for Islam and Christianity to differ as well. That difference begins with their statements concerning what I have called 'the integrating idea' of religion.

Al-Faruqi saw *Tawhid* (the unity of God)[28] correlating all of Islam into one consistent system. Simply put *Tawhid* means, "There is no God but God [Allah]." (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 73) *Tawhid* is more than the repeated creed of Muslim faith. Al-Faruqi states that it is a life commitment to the principle that Allah exists and is One, and that He is the Creator, the Master, Provider, Sustainer, the ultimate metaphysical cause, purpose and end of everything that is. (Al-Faruqi 1981, p. 15) Al-Faruqi writes, "Without *al tawhid*, there can be no Islam;" for *Tawhid* is the essence of Islam. (Al-Faruqi 1992, p. 19; Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 73)

Tawhid appears throughout Al-Faruqi's writings as the ground for arguments of faith, action, politics, personal and family life. In *Al Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* Al-Faruqi gives a book length exposition of this central integrating concept in Islam. Commitment to the unity or Oneness of God (Allah) identifies Islamic civilization (p. 17), distinguishes Islam from Judaism and Christianity (p. 20-21), commits human beings to an ethic of action that gives meaning and purpose to history

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[28] *Al Tawhid* -- unity, Oneness, or 'unicity' of God (Allah).

(p. 33), implies the unity of knowledge whether by reason or revelation (p. 39-45), all religious truth is one though differentiated by contextual circumstance and degree of human obedience (p. 46-48), the universe is a cosmos (an ordered creation) not a chaos (p. 49-59), and mankind's specific role is to affirm in life human viceregency (*khalifa*) for God on earth (p. 61).

Al-Farqui's apologetic reflects *Tawhid* (unity of God) as well. The unity of God means the unity of truth; reason and revelation do not conflict, but each confirms the other. *Tawhid* becomes the supreme principle of integration and evaluation. "What accords with it is accepted and integrated. What does not is rejected and condemned." (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 77) Al-Faruqi encouraged Muslims to produce an understanding of society built on the principle of the unity of truth. He also taught that they were to work to build public institutions and public law upon an Islamic base. (Al-Faruqi 1981, p. 13-14; Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 77-86) God's will is to call all men to recognize and confess the one universal *Ummah* (community of faith or brotherhood). (Al-Faruqi 1998j, p. 312-314) Human beings come under judgment for how they do or do not respond to this call to realize the unity of God. (Al-Faruqi 1998j, p. 306) Al-Faruqi believed that differences of belief arose from differences of context. The way to unity is finding the 'ultimate principles' to judge between truth claims as we saw in our second chapter. (see also Al-Faruqi 1998j, p. 311-12) The Muslim must strive to bring about a universal Islamic state where Islamic law rules worldwide. (Al-Faruqi 1998c, p. 347-351) Even Al-Faruqi's work in the area of Islamization of knowledge grows out of *Tawhid*. He saw Western social sciences rejecting the concept of the unity of truth for some form of relativism. "All learning . . . must reorder itself under the principle of *tawhid*." (Al-Faruqi 1981, p. 15) Like the infinite conception of Allah in Islam, so is the wide-ranging application that Al-Faruqi makes of *Al Tawhid* in his thought.

Tawhid is therefore the summary statement of Al-Faruqi's Islamic presupposition. He wrote that *Al Tawhid* is "self-evident to human reason either via study of nature or by

divine disclosure in revelation." (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 132) Al-Faruqi believed human beings were compelled to *Tawhid* like "a geometrical theorem."[29] In *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (p. 74-6), Al-Faruqi presented "*Tawhid* as a Worldview." The pattern presented there parallels his "Six Principles of Meta-Religion" and his basic principles of Islam; which we have seen demonstrate the Islamic presupposition of his Comparative Religions evaluation of religion. *Tawhid* (the unity of God) integrates Al-Faruqi's thought into a system.

Van Til, on the other hand, repeatedly emphasized 'Christian theism' is a complex of doctrines, all of which are 'central' or 'crucial' to understanding Christianity. (Frame 1976, p. 13; Van Til 1976, p. 1) According to Van Til, human beings are not to deduce the Christian system from one doctrine. We must gather all 'facts' and 'teaching' of Scripture and organize them into a meaningful whole. (Van Til 1969a, p. 38) Each doctrine is a 'perspectival' look at God and His self-revelation through what He has made. "We may therefore speak of the 'system of truth' contained in Scripture if only we are careful to note that its various doctrines are not to be obtained by way of deduction from some master concept." (Van Til 1967a, p. 7) Van Til's presentation of the doctrines of Christian theism is marked by "*relations of dependence* among biblical doctrines," and "a profound sense of *unity* of Christian truth." (Frame 1976, p. 10 & 12) Because they all constitute a system and have been attacked from time to time; "specific truths of Christianity must be defended as soon as they are stated." (Van Til 1976, p. 3)

However, some doctrines are more fundamental to Van Til's organization of the Christian system. (Frame 1976, p. 10) They support all the others, rather than cancel out the importance of others. (Frame 1976, p. 13) Various lists of basic or fundamental truths of Van Til's Christian theism have been made. On page 24-25 of *Christian Apologetics*, Van Til listed the main doctrines of Christian theism. There he

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[29] The full quotation is "divine unity 'is crushingly compelling by its own evidence that a man must acquiesce it as to the conclusion of a geometric theorem.'" (Cragg quotes Al-Faruqi in Chapter Eight, 'Islamic Ethics' page 212 in World Religions and Global Ethics, (New York, 1989). Cragg 1992, p. 127)

lists, "the doctrine of the ontological Trinity, the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of the fall of man and of his redemption through Christ." (Van Til 1976) In *Why I Believe in God* he listed four doctrines: creation, providence, prophecy, and miracle; which "represent the whole of Christian theism." (Van Til n. d., p. 13-15) For Van Til there are a variety of "central" or "crucial" doctrines and centers to Christian theism. (Frame 1995, p. 173-174) Was Van Til confused, uncertain, or inconsistent on the nature of Christian theism? No, but the best explanation how doctrines relate in Van Til's Christian theism is the concept of 'perspectivalism'. Perspectivalism means all Christian doctrines for Van Til are mutually interdependent. One is not more important nor that from which we can deduce all the others. "There are many 'central doctrines', perspectivally related. God does not give us a single axiom from which everything else must be deduced; rather, he gives us a complex revelation of many truths in unity." (Frame 1995, p. 175) "Each major doctrine provides a perspective in terms of which the whole of Christianity can be viewed." (Frame 1995, p. 174)

Christian theism is a system that reflects the 'Truth' of God as a fine diamond reflects light. The diamond sparkles reflecting light that changes colors and brightness as the beholder looks at it from different angles. So the spiritual eye looking at Christian theism from the perspectives of creation, providence, the Fall, the Trinity, and other doctrines. Van Til's doctrines of Christian theism are the 'perspectival' look of the believer at the unified revelation of God. Christian theism is, for Van Til, the integrating principle that provides a base for rational understanding of all knowledge, including religion.

Particular Ideas

GOD
Tawhid for Al-Faruqi means Allah alone is divine. He is absolutely unique and transcendent. (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 73) God is so unlike anything we can imagine that "God cannot be known." (Al-Faruqi 1962, p.180 & 219) What human beings know, is God's will. He knows God only as the hierarchical values of

axiology[30] that motivate human beings to act according to that will. (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 219-20 & 252) As a result Al-Faruqi presents knowledge of God as knowledge of God's will which human beings are to pursue in life; God is known in action not intention or simple comprehension. In moral action God is realized in the 'actual' realm of being.

Christian theism for Van Til also asserts the essential incomprehensibility of God. (Van Til 1974, p. 10) Human beings cannot comprehend God because God has a "self-contained" kind of being, divine; the universe has a "dependent" kind of being, created. (Van Til 1976, p. 8-9) A human being, not eternal and dependent, cannot comprehend (exhaustively understand) God. However, God has unified comprehensive knowledge of Himself and all that exists; for his plan comprehends all that was, is and is to come. (Van Til 1976, p. 6 & 7) Van Til saw God making this knowledge known to humanity by analogy, that is according to the order of creation. (Van Til 1974, p. 12) Therefore, human beings cannot comprehend God (exhaustively understand and know God). Human beings are able according to their nature as dependent created beings to have true 'analogical knowledge' of God.

Tawhid means God is One, a statement of the unity of God. (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 73) There are no persons; no parts nor composite in the divine nature. Even his attributes are the descriptions of God's actions with respect to the world, not descriptions in part of his being.

Van Til's Christian theism clearly accepts the orthodox Christian doctrine of the 'Trinity'. (Frame 1995, p. 63) Van Til asserts God has unity in himself that He is One. "There is and can only be one God." (Van Til 1976, p. 5) At the same time Van Til sees Scripture teaching an 'ontological Trinity'. "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are each a personality and together constitute the exhaustively personal God. There is an eternal, internal and self-conscious interaction between the three persons of

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[30] Webster's Dictionary defines axiology as "the study of the nature, types, and criteria of values and value judgment, especially in ethics." (Mish 1986, p. 121)

the Godhead.... The diversity and the unity of the Godhead are therefore equally ultimate." (Van Til 1976, p. 8) Van Til clearly agrees that Christians see this doctrine on the whole as a 'mystery'. (Van Til 1974, p. 230)

CREATION

In Islam Creation serves the purpose of the Creator by design; for it is a 'cosmos' (an orderly creation) not a 'chaos'. (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p.74) Everything in Creation realizes the Creator's will according to necessary determination of natural law except human beings. Human beings do so by personal consent. Only human beings can deflect the 'actual' realm in another direction from its destiny. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 30) The divine plan in Creation is "to arrive at a perfect world by creating an imperfect one and a human capable of perfecting it." (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 93; Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 31; Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p.74) Creation will have increased 'valueness' as the accountable and responsible 'free' action of humanity 'realizes' the Creator's will in the world. [31]

Al-Faruqi's understanding of *Tawhid* appears to exclude God from the realm of nature. Al-Faruqi wrote that nothing in Creation "can be God or godly in any sense .. . God is totally other than creation . . . nothing, is like unto Him . . . nothing in creation can be a likeness or symbol for God, nothing can represent Him. Indeed, He is by definition beyond representation. God is He Whom no aesthetic intuition whatever is possible." (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 85-6) God's will is known in Creation, not God; He cannot be known in His person in or by Created things.

For Van Til Creation is a fact of Christian theism. (Van Til n. d., p. 13) "Every fact of the space-time universe is created by God and is what it is by virtue of its place in the plan of God. It is therefore God's revelation of his plan that comes to partial expression in every fact of 'nature' and history." (Van Til 1974, p. 16) Therefore every fact of Creation derives its existence and meaning from the absolute existence and

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[31] 'Realization' is Al-Faruqi's way of saying how the 'ideal realm' becomes real in the 'actual realm'; that is how things in Created world manifest the transcendent 'values' of the divine.

meaning that God had in Himself before Creation. God did not create to become self-conscious. (Van Til 1974, p. 62) God created the world for humanity and through it revealed Himself to human beings. (Van Til 1974, p. 64) The whole Creation is a revelation of God. (Van Til 1974, p. 63) Human beings are created in God's image that means human knowledge can never fully comprehend God, but it is true knowledge because God created it. What exists conforms to God's eternal knowledge according to its created nature. What God says something is or means; is what it is and means; in reality and in truth.

REVELATION

Tawhid means for Al-Faruqi that Islam recognizes other peoples have received revelation from God via prophets. According to Al-Faruqi, all prophets gave the same message: 'God is One *tawhid* and morality, do good and avoid evil.' A prophet perceives his message as all other people understand truth, but with a higher sense. (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 264) God moved Muhammad the last Prophet to give the 'final revelation' of His will to settle the differences once and for all. (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 193-194) The Qur'an and the Sunnah[32] are the 'what' of revelation, where Allah laid down the values and principles to guide action. (Al-Faruqi 1981, p. 6) Differences in religions arose from the message context and vested interests that did not always welcome revelation. (Al-Faruqi and Al-Faruqi 1986, p. 193) Fixed to historical contexts and limited in scope by the ability of the recipients to understand, those other revelations became subject to corruption, contention, and doubted veracity. Revelation itself was not necessary because human beings could know what was necessary apart from it; however, revelation hastened man's perception of God's values. (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 262) God gave revelation to help human beings achieve felicity. (Al-Faruqi 1981, p. 5) Revelation corrects, assists and propels reason in conceptualizing God's will. (Al-Faruqi 1962, p. 265)

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[32] Qur'an -- "The revelations which came to Muhammad from God and were collected in a book and canonized in 646 CE. Muslims regard the Qur'an as the eternal word of God." Sunnah -- "An example of the Prophet Muhammad's behavior which is a

Van Til's Christian theism lays out a very systematic charting of the revelation the individual receives from nature, his human nature, and God. (Van Til 1974, p. 64-5) However, even in a revelational Creation, humans could not know the purpose of that Creation apart from God's positive supernatural word. God's direct orders become clear interpretations of 'what is'; whether we speak of redemptive events or observations of science and technology. (Van Til 1974, p. 68) Since God gives this word revelation to human beings, they become the only self-conscious re-interpreters of the universe. This also points out human interpretation and knowledge has limits; people cannot comprehend anything exhaustively, even themselves. (Van Til 1974, p. 69-71) After the Fall, God's word revelation took on greater importance. Human perception became clouded by sin. Human beings ought to see God as Creator and Sustainer of the world, for Creation continues to show forth God's character; but pessimism, agnosticism, and skepticism abound. Due to sin human beings are mistaken about God, so they are also mistaken about nature and their own human nature. (Van Til 1974, p. 75-85) Rationality to make sense of Creation requires a correct understanding of God. Only a Christian presupposition allows human beings to reason properly about anything in the world. (Van Til 1974, p. 100-109) Humankind needs 'special revelation' from God because their rebellion necessitates explanation of the objective work of Christ and the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. Human beings need a revelation of grace. (Van Til 1974, p. 111) Scripture is the authoritative interpretation of the redemptive facts. No human interpreter is needed to understand that interpretation; it is eminently manifest to ordinary intelligence. The problem with Scripture is not Man's understanding of it, but his unwillingness to submit to it. (Van Til 1974, p. 134-145)

PARADOX AND CONTRADICTION

Both men rejected that there was any 'ultimate paradox' in religious knowledge. (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 11-12; Van Til 1967a, p. 45) However, Al-Faruqi saw apparent

standard of conduct to be emulated by all Muslims. As a collective term, all the reported traditions recording the Prophet's behavior." (Al-Faruqi 1998g, p. 82)

contradictions as a call to reexamine reasoning or what revelation really said. Human beings can reconcile apparent contradictions because of "the unity of truth." (Al-Faruqi 1967, p. 11-12; cf. Cragg 1992, p. 132)

On the other hand, Van Til grants that in Christian theism "all teaching of Scripture is apparently contradictory." (Van Til 1972, p. 142) Since Scripture speaks to us of God, who "is not fully comprehensible to us we are bound to come into what seems to be contradiction in all our knowledge." (Van Til 1967a, p. 44). However, lack of exhaustive comprehension did not mean lack of true knowledge; for apparent contradictions find ultimate reconciliation in God and what God has told us must be true. (Frame 1976, p. 28-37; Van Til 1974, p. 45)

We could go on and provide a growing list of doctrines and issues of conflict between the apologetic of these two men. However, these few above demonstrate that their different religious presuppositions produce different integrating and particular ideas about religion.

Conclusion

I began with a brief review of why inter-faith dialogue is becoming increasingly important in the modern world and particularly American society. I believe my review of the apologetic arguments of these two men, both immigrant American religious scholars, confirms the need for such dialogue.

First, the need for such dialogue will continue despite the increasing secularist approach to religion in the West. Both men in my study, university educated at an advanced level in a secular discipline, came to contradictory conclusions about religion and its implications for meaning in life. Both argued for the absolute transcendental basis for rationality of their views. Each believed rejection of their respective integrating idea left humankind with only skepticism and personal bias to evaluate religious concerns. The influence of each scholar was magnified and continues through their students. Also, every individual has some degree of influence on the faith perspective of those around him or her. Better that our faith and learning, as scholars or ordinary people, lead to dialogue rather than open and sometimes physical conflict.

Second, the dialogue must deal with the presuppositions that ground religion. Nobody's views are completely neutral. Presuppositions provide the basic assumptions for human reason to do its work. As hard as he tried to examine 'religion' from a neutral perspective, Al-Faruqi's 'meta-religion' grew from his Islamic roots. Even the Christianity he counterposed to Islam was a Christianity interpreted by critical views favorable to an Islamic perspective. Christian Islamicists often do the same when they use views of Muslim modernists as those of Muslims in general. (Zebiri 1997, p. 222) Van Til sets forth the case for all religious views starting from some presuppositional base, including claims not to have any presuppositions. Better to allow the opposition to state its own presupposition and thereby discover what is really the point of disagreement. In the use of dialogue to reduce conflict, the human

tendency is to sell short real differences. I agree with both Al-Faruqi and Van Til. Contradictory ideas cannot both be right. Even Western secularism has presuppositions; that either all religions are partly right and partly wrong; that truth does not matter; or truth cannot be discerned in religious dogma. The purpose of honest dialogue we must admit is conversion; not conversion to a view, but to 'Truth.' (Al-Faruqi 1998h, p. 249)

Van Til never dealt in depth with an Islamic argument like Al-Faruqi's. His writings deal mostly with opposition views within Christianity and Western thought. Those Christians who accept his approach will have to wrestle in detail with the non-Christian arguments of Al-Faruqi. A Van Tillian will have to apply Van Til's presuppositional analysis to Al-Faruqi's presentations of Islam. That will require adopting his positions 'for sake of argument' and showing how Christian theism presents a more consistent evaluation of reality than Al-Faruqi's *Al Tawhid*.

Advocates of Muslim-Christian dialogue have to find some way of bringing together the more controversial elements of their faith communities; if not in person, at least in written material and forums. The days of relative isolation from other systems of religious thought have come to an end. A shrinking global community and rapid media links have put every religion on the world stage. If efforts, to promote dialogue, are not successful, the doomsayers of crisis and conflict will prove prophetic indeed. As I did my study I found myself wondering, why Al-Faruqi and Van Til never came together in dialogue or even debate. They lived and worked in the same city, in related fields, and had such strong influence and witness to their respective faith communities. As we look to the future of Muslim-Christian relations we should not ask, Why?; but rather, Why not?

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